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SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES SIGN SOCIAL PACT

¶11. (SBU) Summary. Four of the six presidential candidates signed a social pact formulated by three civil society organizations. The pact contains general ideas and goals, but lacks substance. Despite the lack of detail and the inability to enforce the pact, the fact that the candidates felt it was in their interest to sign it is an indication of public focus on the country's social ills, even if only during the elections season. End Summary.

¶12. (U) Four of the six presidential candidates, Elvin Santos of the Liberal Party, Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo of the National Party, Felicito Avila of the Christian Democratic Party, and Bernard Martinez of the Social Democratic Innovation and Unity Party (PINU), signed a social pact, broadcast on national television, on November 3. Three civil society organizations, the Political Observer, the Liberty and Democracy Association, and the Honduras Peace Alliance, were the moving forces behind the pact and will monitor compliance with it.

¶13. (U) The candidates pledged to strengthen and guarantee institutional democracy through respect for the results of the general election scheduled for November 29. They promised to strengthen participatory democracy through a process of social cohesion to respond to the inequality, marginalization and lack of opportunity that exists in many sectors of Honduran society and to encourage gender and diversity based development. The candidates promised to give impetus to a dynamic program of development of micro, small, and medium sized enterprises through government actions including financing, capacity building, technical assistance, credit, and identification of niche markets.

¶14. (U) The candidates also pledged to carry out the National Decentralization Program. They promised to improve the quality of national education at all levels and to update the National Health Plan to give impetus to programs that promote health and prevent illness. They also promised to execute a policy to reduce and combat crime, including strengthening the investigative and operational capacities of the National Police and the Public Ministry, and to reform the penal system. They promised to accelerate implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy and recognized that economic policy is not more important than social policy, but rather that they are complementary, and that capacity building and social justice for Hondurans' well-being is as important as economic management for the financial prosperity of the country.

¶15. (SBU) Comment: The pact is devoid of detail so it does not

bind the candidates to anything other than general ideas. It is unenforceable and the only tool to force the candidates to pay attention to what they signed would be the negative publicity generated by the civil society organizations monitoring the pact if they perceive that the candidates and eventual president-elect are ignoring it. Nonetheless, it is significant that civil society has been successful in highlighting the country's social problems and in convincing four of the six presidential candidates that it was in their interest to publicly express their commitment to address these issues, even if in very general terms.

LLORENS